

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Government should pay price for botched meter reform

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NSW Irrigators' Council (NSWIC) rejects IPART's proposal for water users to cover the implementation costs of the NSW Government's botched roll-out of metering reforms.

The new pricing proposal comes amid broad recognition that the NSW Government is dragging its heels on addressing barriers preventing water users complying with new metering standards.

In a scathing submission<sup>1</sup> to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), NSWIC indicated water users cannot afford the hit on top of the expense of replacing their current meters, and 'Government must fund the implementation of its own reform'.

"Water users will get a shock when they get their next bill, and the largest part of the hike will be funding the Government's stroll-out of metering reforms," said NSWIC CEO, Claire Miller.

Irrigators across NSW have long had meters installed and operating. The Government decided in 2018 to impose a new gold standard for meters following its own failures on compliance enforcement, and a need rebuild public confidence in its water management.

No other State requires its water users to meet the new standard, and the market until recently did not actually manufacture meters capable of meeting the new standard in the field.

"Water users large and small across NSW are facing tens of thousands of dollars in additional costs to replace existing meters with new meters meeting the new standard," said Ms Miller.

"At the outset, water users were assured the Government would cover its own costs. No one saw it coming that the Government would change its mind and ask industry to also pick up the bill for 100% of the behind-the-scenes administration and bureaucratic aspects."

Cardno has reviewed the proposal for IPART and raised concerns that the governments delays in the reform rollout has potential to increase some costs. The costs are recovered on a valley-specific basis, meaning one valley does not fund another.

Delays include limited pattern-approved devices & timeliness of approval; lack of market capacity, manufacturing delays and supply issues (i.e. due to Covid-19); mobile coverage issues (for the DAS/telemetry); a shortage of Duly Qualified Persons (DQPs) to install and validate the new devices; and, unresponsive administration when DQPs and water users seek advice and assistance to navigate the Government's validation and certification system.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nswic.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021-07-23-NSWIC-Submission-IPART-Supp-Draft-Report-Metering.pdf>